

Phil 330: Feminist Philosophy

Spring 2023, MW 3:30–4:45pm
Modern Languages 311

Instructor: Ding (they/them¹ and she/her)
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Office hours: W 2:15–3:15pm, F 2:15–2:45pm, and by appointment

1. Course overview and objectives

As the women's liberation movement swept through the United States in the 60s and 70s, communities of feminists soon began to explore how philosophy could and should respond to feminism. Not only did these efforts result in significant philosophical contributions to feminism, but feminism has since profoundly challenged, expanded, and reshaped philosophy in turn.

In this course, we will trace the development of contemporary feminist philosophy from the early days of the women's liberation movement all the way to the present, with an emphasis on trans and queer voices, issues, and experiences throughout this fraught history. We will discuss feminist attempts to formulate, answer, and later contest questions about the nature of sex, gender, construction, and oppression; pleasure and desire under patriarchy; knowledge, ignorance, and objectivity; the relationship between feminist, left, antiracist, disability, queer, and trans politics; and the meaning and paradigms of liberation. In so doing, a broader aim of this course is to consider the ideas suggested in these answers as *conclusions*—rather than unexamined presumptions—of a critical philosophical project to uncover and resist a social reality that otherwise appears so natural, inevitable, unremarkable, and even invisible.

2. Expected learning outcomes

My expectations are, at the conclusion of this course, you will be able to

1. Explain major issues, arguments, and debates in contemporary feminist philosophy;
2. Charitably interpret and critically assess philosophical texts and arguments;
3. Construct a well-reasoned, original argument that responds to a philosophical issue in or about feminism;
4. Discuss how philosophical reflection may shed light on contested political and social issues in a divided contemporary society such as the United States;
5. Discuss how conceptual tools may help to clarify and express minority experiences that are otherwise masked by oppressive social structures.

Phil 330 is cross-listed in Gender and Women's Studies. It fulfills the Tier 2 Humanities and Diversity Emphasis requirements of the General Education Curriculum as well as the Ethics and Value Theory requirement of the philosophy major.

1. If you are not familiar with the use of “they” as a singular pronoun, I encourage you to check out this helpful guide from the APA Style blog: <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/singular-they>.

3. Required texts

- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Harvard University Press, 1989. Paperback, 978-0674896468, \$32.50. (Be sure to look for used copies!)
- Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*, Seal Press, 2016. Paperback, 978-1580056229, \$16.80. The original 2007 edition also works.

All other required readings will be made available digitally through D2L. If there are any barriers (technical, financial, etc.) that make it difficult for you to access any of the readings, please don't be afraid to let me know.

4. Assessment

Participation	10%
Writing exercises	15%
Short essay	30%
Final project	45%

All required assignments must be completed in order to pass this course. **An F received on any work due to academic dishonesty is grounds for an F in the course.**

4.1. Letter grades

The University of Arizona Standard Letter Grade Scheme will apply:

A	90% and above	D	60%–69.9%
B	80%–89.9%	E/F	59.9% and below
C	70%–79.9%		

Requests for incomplete (I) or withdrawal (W) must be made in accordance with university policies, which are available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/grades-and-grading-system>.

4.2. Participation

In approaching a philosophical issue, we will often find ourselves in the middle of a long conversation among many different authors. A hallmark of what we do in philosophy is the way we participate in this conversation and position ourselves in relation to these authors: we are not outside observers just here to report what each author has said and perhaps to summarize some of the points of agreement and disagreement; rather, we are equal parties to the conversation—just like everybody else. In this sense, it's helpful to think of philosophy classes not as where you come to be lectured about particular philosophical views, but as where we gather to *do philosophy together*, to contribute our own insights to ongoing philosophical conversations.

Participation in philosophy courses also serves a wide range of pedagogical purposes: class discussions help students make sense of difficult ideas and arguments in the texts; they help students learn to explain and apply concepts, analyze and assess arguments, and formulate and respond to worries and objections; in addition, they contribute to other students' learning experience by helping to build a vibrant, mutually supportive classroom environment that encourages questions, exchange of ideas, and philosophical reflection.

You are expected to read the assigned texts *carefully* and *critically* in advance of each class (remember to bring a copy to class with you as we will often look at difficult passages together). It's useful to keep in mind that philosophical writing is, at bottom, *argumentative*—that is, its goal is to *defend* or *criticize* a particular view. As you do the readings, be sure to:

- Keep track of what the author says they mean by a particular term or distinction, and take note of terms and distinctions that don't quite make sense to you.
- Identify the view the author is defending and the argument they are offering in support of their view (be careful to distinguish passages where the author is speaking for themselves and where they are explaining another author's view or considering objections!), and write down thoughts and questions in the margin as you react to each step in the argument.
- Ask yourself if you think what the author is saying is not only plausible but well-argued. If not, think about why not: Is it because the author's argument relies on a false premise, or is it because the author's reasoning is fallacious? Is there a more plausible or more arguable way of formulating the point the author hopes to make? Are there countervailing considerations, alternative positions, or further complications that the author fails to take into account? Even if you agree with the author, try to anticipate objections that other readers may reasonably raise and think about how you can respond to them on the author's behalf.

Class participation will make up 10% of your final grade.

4.3. Writing exercises

Writing philosophy is daunting—as a second-language user, I know this firsthand. The writing exercises are a series of scaffolding assignments designed to help you learn to write *analytically* and *argumentatively* in what I hope can be a far less intimidating manner.

Through these exercises, you will have opportunities to practice four essential philosophical writing skills: (1) illustrating abstract ideas with examples; (2) presenting arguments; (3) offering and responding to objections; and (4) crafting thesis statements.

The best three grades you receive on the four writing exercises will together make up 15% of your final grade.

4.4. Short essay

The short essay then offers you an opportunity to synthesize and showcase your philosophical writing skills by asking you to reconsider a question, issue, or argument raised by second-wave feminism with the benefit of hindsight. I will distribute instructions in advance.

The short essay will make up 30% of your final grade.

4.5. Final project

I'd like to try out a flexible final assignment format this semester. My hope is that the final project will allow you to further engage with our course readings and class discussions in a way that suits and reflects your own interests.

For the final project, you are free to pursue either a term paper or an equally substantial creative project of your own choice—for example, you might want to record a podcast episode, imagine an alternative history, curate an exhibit, reenact a story or a moment, create a zine, adapt a reading into a different medium, illustrate an argument or debate, build a website or an application, design a board

game, script and produce a crash course video, profile a community member, or draft a short story or a piece of public writing (really, the sky's the limit!). I'm happy to consider group projects as well, but I will need to know that you have a clear and explicit division of labor as well as a workable assessment and accountability plan.

A brief project proposal is due to D2L by 11:59pm on Thursday, April 27. Unless you are writing a term paper, you must have met with me by Wednesday, April 26 at the very latest to discuss your plan. While the proposal is not graded, failure to submit one may result in a zero on the final project. Your final project is due to D2L by 11:59pm on Tuesday, May 9, and will make up 45% of the final grade.

5. Honors credit

If you would like to take this class for honors credit, please contact me as early as possible (and definitely by Wednesday, February 8) to discuss your idea. The honors contract will require you to complete an additional independent project that explores one of our course themes in greater depth. For more information, please consult <https://honors.arizona.edu/academics/honors-contracts>.

6. Excused absences

Please email me if there is a reason you can't come to class, but you *don't* need to show me any kind of documentation. This is an honor system, and I trust you not to abuse it—all I ask is you also be flexible and considerate when you are in a position of power to do so.

- The UA policy concerning class attendance, participation, and administrative drops is available at <http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/class-attendance-participation-and-administrative-drop>.
- The UA policy regarding absences for any sincerely held religious belief, observance or practice will be accommodated where reasonable: <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/religious-accommodation-policy>.
- Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or the Dean's designee) will be honored; see <http://policy.arizona.edu/employmenthuman-resources/attendance>.

7. Late assignments, extensions, and make-ups

No late assignments will be accepted, but an extension will ordinarily be granted as long as you (1) have a clear plan for completing the assignment and (2) let me know your plan by email **no later than 6 hours before the deadline** (unless the delay is justified). Likewise, there is *no* need to show me any kind of documentation.

As an instructor, I always appreciate students asking for extensions ahead of time when possible. Make-ups for missed assignments after the fact are generally disfavored, and will be granted only to accommodate emergencies and other unexpected circumstances, such as physical (including mental) health, child care, family emergencies, and military duty. We can always work something out, but it's important that you contact me as soon as you can.

8. Academic integrity

8.1. *Code of Academic Integrity*

Students are encouraged to share intellectual views and discuss freely the principles and applications of course materials. However, graded work/exercises must be the product of independent effort unless otherwise instructed. Students are expected to adhere to the UA Code of Academic Integrity as

described in the UA General Catalog. See <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academic-integrity/students/academic-integrity>.

8.2. Plagiarism

I view plagiarism as a *very serious violation of the university's Code of Academic Integrity, and you should as well.* I strongly encourage you to review this helpful guide prepared by the university library: <https://new.library.arizona.edu/research/citing/plagiarism>. I understand different instructors may draw the line somewhat differently; if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism for the purposes of our course, please don't hesitate to ask me.

8.3. Inappropriate use of class notes and course materials

Disseminating class notes or course materials beyond the classroom community, such as selling them to other students or to a third party for resale, is strictly prohibited. Violations to this rule are subject to the Code of Academic Integrity and may result in course sanctions. Additionally, students who use D2L or UA email to sell or buy such notes or course materials are subject to Student Code of Conduct violations for misuse of student email addresses. This misconduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

9. (Lack of) diversity in philosophy

Unfortunately, philosophy as an institutionalized discipline is remarkably white, cis male, straight, able-bodied, and middle-class. This lack of diversity is often apparent just from the topics and authors typically taught in introductory philosophy courses. However, philosophy as a whole is becoming more and more diverse thanks to the efforts of several generations of philosophers. As a philosophy student, you can also help the profession address its diversity and inclusiveness problems by seriously engaging with minority authors and supporting your fellow minority students.

The American Philosophical Association (APA) has a useful handout for minority undergraduate students in philosophy, which you can read here: https://www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/diversity/Advice_for_Undergrads.pdf.

A valuable local opportunity is the Arizona Feminist Philosophy Graduate Conference organized annually by graduate students at the UA Department of Philosophy. The conference brings together graduate students working on feminist issues from around the country and the world. This year, it will take place on the weekend of **April 28–30**. You can find more information and watch recordings of past talks at <https://femphilaz.com>.

10. Tentative schedule

Overview

- Jan 11 (W) Introduction: Why feminist philosophy?
 – bell hooks, “Theory as Liberatory Practice,” in *Teaching to Transgress* (Routledge, 1994)

A new wave of feminism

- Jan 16 (M) Martin Luther King Day (no class)
 – Suggested: *My Name Is Pauli Murray* (2021), 91 min

- Jan 18 (W) “One is not born, but rather becomes, [a?] woman”
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949):
 - “Translators’ Note,” pp. xviii–xx
 - “Introduction,” pp. 3–17
 - “Biological Data,” pp. 21–26, 44–48
 - “Childhood,” pp. 283–340 (skim all the long block quotes, but think about why Beauvoir might feel the need to provide such extensive evidence)
- Jan 23 (M) Feminism and the Civil Rights Movement
- Pauli Murray and Mary O. Eastwood, “Jane Crow and the Law: Sex Discrimination and Title VII,” *George Washington Law Review* (1965), pp. 232–42
 - Casey Hayden and Mary King, “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo” (1965)
- Writing exercise I due at the beginning of class**
- Jan 25 (W) Feminism and the New Left
- New York Radical Women, “Principles” and “No More Miss America!” (1968)
 - *Notes from the First Year* (1968) (“Notes I”):
 - Shulamith Firestone, “When Women Rap about Sex,” pp. 8–11
 - Carol Hanisch and Elizabeth Sutherland, “Women of the World Unite—We Have Nothing to Lose but Our Men!,” pp. 12–16
 - Anne Koedt, “Women and the Radical Movement,” pp. 26–27
 - *Notes from the Second Year* (1970) (“Notes II”):
 - “A Female Junkie Speaks,” interview by Lucille Iverson, p. 31
 - Kathie Sarachild, “Program for Feminist Consciousness-Raising,” pp. 78–80
 - Irene Peslikis, “Resistance to Consciousness-Raising,” p. 81
 - Jennifer Gardner, “False Consciousness,” pp. 82–83
 - “Redstockings Manifesto,” pp. 112–13
- Jan 30 (M) “The personal is political”
- *Notes II*:
 - Joreen (Jo Freeman), “The BITCH Manifesto,” pp. 5–9
 - Pat Mainardi, “The Politics of Housework,” pp. 28–31
 - Anne Koedt, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm,” pp. 37–41
 - Carol Hanisch, “The Personal Is Political,” pp. 76–78
 - Barbara Susan, “An Abortion Testimonial,” p. 94
 - Kate Millet, “Sexual Politics: A Manifesto for Revolution,” pp. 111–12
 - *Notes from the Third Year* (1971) (“Notes III”):
 - Judy Syfers, “Why I Want a Wife,” pp. 13–14
 - André Leo, “ADC: Marriage to the State,” pp. 66–68
 - Sherry Sonnett Trumbo, “A Woman’s Place Is in the Oven,” pp. 90–92
- Feb 1 (W) “The Lavender Menace”
- Susan Brownmiller, “‘Sisterhood Is Powerful’: A Member of the Women’s Liberation Movement Explains What It’s All About,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 15, 1970, p. 140
 - “Women’s Lib: A Second Look,” *Time*, December 14, 1970, p. 50.

- Radicalesbians, “The Woman Identified Woman” (1970), reprinted in *Notes III*, pp. 81–84
 - Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, “Is Women’s Liberation a Lesbian Plot?,” in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (Basic Books, 1971)
- Feb 6 (M) “**The Transsexual Empire**”
- “A Collective Editorial,” *The Lesbian Tide* (December 1972), pp. 21, 29
 - *The Lesbian Tide* (May–June 1973):
 - “Black Caucus Position,” p. 19
 - Barbara McLean, “Dairy of a Mad Organizer,” pp. 36–38 (“Friday, 9:00,” and the first six paragraphs of “Saturday, the 14th”)
 - Robin Morgan, “Lesbianism and Feminism: Synonyms or Contradictions?,” pp. 30–34
 - Beth Elliot, “Of Infidels and Inquisitions,” pp. 15, 26
 - Lou Sullivan, “A Transvestite Answers a Feminist,” *Gay Peoples Union [GPU] News* (August 1973), pp. 9–11, 14
- Writing exercise II due at the beginning of class**
- Feb 8 (W) The possibility of feminism?
- Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1977)
 - bell hooks, “Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women,” in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (South End, 1984)

Knowledge and oppression

- Feb 13 (M) Oppression
- Marilyn Frye, “Oppression” and “Sexism,” in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Crossing, 1983)
- Feb 15 (W) Going beyond differences
- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Harvard UP, 1989), chaps. 10, 12
- Feb 20 (M) Producing ignorance
- Nancy Tuana, “Coming to Understand: Orgasm and the Epistemology of Ignorance,” *Hypatia* (1994)
- Feb 22 (W) No class (Ding in Colorado for conference presentation)
- Writing exercise III due to D2L by 11:59pm**
- Feb 27 (M) Hermeneutical injustice
- Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford UP, 2007), chap. 7
- Mar 1 (W) “View from nowhere”?
- MacKinnon, *State*, chaps. 5–6 (skim pp. 88–94)
- Mar 6 (M) Spring recess (no class)
- Mar 8 (W) Spring recess (no class) - International Women’s Day
- Mar 13 (M) “Pleasure under patriarchy”?
- MacKinnon, *State*, chap. 7

- Mar 15 (W) Forced sex
 - MacKinnon, *State*, chaps. 9, 11
- Mar 20 (M) Multifaceted oppression
 - Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” *Philosophical Forum* (1988)

Writing exercise IV due at the beginning of class

Reality and construction

- Mar 22 (W) Enforcing sex
 - Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (Basic Books, 2000), chap. 3
- Mar 27 (M) Regulating bodies
 - Iris Marion Young, “Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality,” *Human Studies* (1980)

Short essay due at the beginning of class

- Mar 29 (W) Constructing reality
 - Sally Haslanger, “Ontology and Social Construction,” *Philosophical Topics* (1995)
- Apr 3 (M) Theorizing intersectionality
 - Sara Bernstein, “The Metaphysics of Intersectionality,” *Philosophical Studies* (2020)

- Apr 5 (W) Experiencing gender
 - Julia Serano, *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity* (Seal, 2007), chaps. 5, 10
- Apr 10 (M) Experiencing gender (cont.)
 - C. Jacob Hale, “Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex without Women or Men,” *Social Text* (1997)
 - Serano, *Whipping Girl*, chaps. 11, 16, 18

Futures?

- Apr 12 (W) Amelioration?
 - Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?,” *Noûs* (2000)
- Apr 17 (M) Inclusion?
 - Katharine Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman,” *Ethics* (2016)
- Apr 19 (W) Reconfiguration?
 - Talia Mae Bettcher, “Trans Women and ‘Interpretive Intimacy’: Some Initial Reflections,” in *The Essential Handbook of Women’s Sexuality*, ed. Donna Castañeda, vol. 2 (Praeger, 2013)
- Apr 24 (M) Reevaluation?
 - Serano, *Whipping Girl*, chap. 19
- Apr 26 (W) Seeing? - Lesbian Visibility Day

- Marilyn Frye, “To Be and Be Seen: The Politics of Reality,” in *The Politics of Reality*, and “Willful Virgin or Do You Have to Be a Lesbian to Be a Feminist?,” in *Willful Virgin: Essays in Feminism, 1976–1992* (Crossing, 1992)

If pursuing the creative project route, clear proposal with Ding by this day

Apr 27 (R)

Final project proposal due to D2L by 11:59pm

Apr 28–30

4th Annual Arizona Feminist Philosophy Graduate Conference

(F–Su)

(More information: <https://femphilaz.com>)

May 1 (M)

Pride?

- Elizabeth Barnes, “Disability Pride,” in *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford UP, 2016)

May 3 (W)

Trans Feminism?

- Serano, *Whipping Girl*, chaps. 12, 20

May 9 (T)

Final project due to D2L by 11:59pm

11. Respect, support, and care for one another

11.1. Materials in this course

Since many of the issues we will cover in this course are not only intellectually but also *personally* relevant, you might find it difficult to read and discuss certain course materials. I want to acknowledge that. It’s perfectly understandable.

It’s therefore important that we *respect, support, and care for* one another throughout the course. Please always feel free to talk to me if you anticipate certain topics will be especially difficult for you, or if you think the way they get discussed in the class is disrespectful or otherwise problematic.

11.2. How to respect, support, and care for one another

Here are some concrete examples of how you can respect, support, and care for your classmates and instructor:

- | | |
|---|---|
| CLASS | – Value everyone’s contribution to class discussions; |
| DISCUSSIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Disagree in a way that takes other people’s ideas seriously and sincerely; – Challenge remarks, jokes, and examples that are racist, sexist, heterosexist, cissexist, misogynistic, transmisogynistic, xenophobic, ableist, ageist, classist, etc.; – Keep discussions inclusive by avoiding talking to only a few specific people. |
| CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Try to remain quiet if you have to arrive late or leave early; – Avoid starting to pack things up until class is completely over; – Listen attentively and avoid distracting or interrupting behavior, such as chatting with the person next to you or checking your phone. |
| GENDER IDENTITY & SEXUAL ORIENTATION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use the pronouns and name you are asked to when you refer to a person; – Avoid assuming a person’s pronouns, gender identity, or sexual orientation based on their appearance, voice, or name; – Be careful not to disclose anyone’s gender identity or sexual orientation (i.e., out them) without their permission, even if they are already out in the classroom—it can put lives in danger; |

- Never inquire about anyone’s genitalia, deadname, “before” photos, medical history, assigned gender at birth, sex life, and so on;
- Use inclusive language (for helpful examples, see <https://www.apaonline.org/page/nonsexist> and <https://transjournalists.org/style-guide>).

If you feel any aspect of this course makes it difficult for you to participate fully, I want to know. This is very important to me.

11.3. University statements on discrimination, harassment, and threatening behavior

To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. To that end, our focus is on the tasks at hand and not on extraneous activities (e.g., texting, chatting, reading a newspaper, making phone calls, web surfing, etc.).

The University of Arizona is committed to creating and maintaining an environment free of discrimination. In support of this commitment, the University prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, based on a protected classification, including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information. For more information, including how to report a concern, please see <http://policy.arizona.edu/human-resources/nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy>.

Our classroom is a place where everyone is encouraged to express well-formed opinions and their reasons for those opinions. We also want to create a tolerant and open environment where such opinions can be expressed without resorting to bullying or discrimination of others.

The UA Threatening Behavior by Students Policy prohibits threats of physical harm to any member of the University community, including to oneself. See <http://policy.arizona.edu/education-and-student-affairs/threatening-behavior-students>.

12. Student support resources

CAMPUS HEALTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Campus Health: https://health.arizona.edu – Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS): https://health.arizona.edu/counseling-psych-services – Mental Health Tools from CAPS: https://health.arizona.edu/mental-health-tools
STUDENT ASSISTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dean of Students Office Student Assistance Services: https://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/support/student-assistance – Survivor Advocacy: https://survivoradvocacy.arizona.edu – Fostering Success: https://fosteringsuccess.arizona.edu
ADVISING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Find your philosophy advisor: https://philosophy.arizona.edu/advising – Become a philosophy major: https://philosophy.arizona.edu/why-study-philosophy
WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Think Tank Writing Center: https://thinktank.arizona.edu/writing-center – Writing Skills Improvement Program: https://wsip.arizona.edu
FOOD BANK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Campus Pantry: https://campuspantry.arizona.edu

CHILD CARE – UA Childcare Choice Program for Students: <https://lifework.arizona.edu/programs/childcare-choice/student>

LGBTQ+ – List of Resources from the Office of LGBTQ Affairs: <https://lgbtq.arizona.edu/students>

DISABILITY – Disability Resource Center: <https://drc.arizona.edu>

13. Accessibility and accommodations

At the University of Arizona, we strive to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please contact the Disability Resource Center (520-621-3268, <https://drc.arizona.edu/>) to establish reasonable accommodations.

14. Syllabus change

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.